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Part Two of Stone's Report on His Visit to the U.S.S.R.

From A Moscow Notebook

ON OUR WAY BACK from our visit to the Kremlin, I asked Natasha my tourist guide whether she had any questions to ask about America. She wanted first to know why Paul Robeson could not get a passport. I said I had criticized the government's action in refusing him a passport. She then wanted to know what I thought of the condemnation of the Communists in the United States. I said I had criticized that in public speeches and in my paper. She asked whether many people agreed with me and I said unfortunately not many did. When she looked triumphant, I asked her a question. "How many people in this country," I asked, "would be willing to defend the right of oppositionists to speak against the government?" To this she had a ready answer.

"We have no oppositionists," replied Natasha.

"But suppose you did?" I insisted.

"How could we have oppositionists," she said. "A man cannot be an oppositionist for himself alone."

"Tolstoy was an oppositionist on his own," I countered.

"No," Natasha replied, "he spoke for the people."

"But the people were voiceless," I replied, "until a few such men had the courage to speak for them."

"Well," Natasha said, "if we had oppositionists, someone would defend their rights."

To illustrate she began to tell me about her trade union.

"In our union," she said, "some people are timid but most of us speak up. Why the other day we even got the reinstatement of a fellow worker who had been fired."

"We have unions in America, too," I said, "and they often get workers reinstated."

"Yes," she said, "but in America unions cannot strike."

"That's not true," I said, 'there are lots of strikes in America."

"No," she said, "under the Taft law, workers cannot strike."

"That's not true," I argued. "The effect of the Taft-Hartley Act has been very much exaggerated. We have strikes all the time."

"But union leaders are afraid to call strikes," Natasha insisted, "because they may be heavily fined."

"There have been fines," I said. "But that has not stopped strikes."

By this time we were back to the Metropol and the conversation was over. Natasha looked at me with condescension as a benighted heathen. The idea that something she had read in the party press might possibly be wrong obviously never occurred to her.

I GOT A DIFFERENT SORT of question about America and a different reaction from a Red Army officer. I saw him sitting by himself in a cafe. I walked over and asked, 'Sprechen sie Deutsch?" He answered in German, "a little." He spoke no English or French and communication was difficult. He was a friendly man, with clear intelligent eyes, and the face of a kindly person. He wanted to know—after I told him I was an American journalist on my first visit to Moscow—how many rooms the ordinary worker has in the United States. This was his first question. I said in a city like New York even well-to-do people might have small apartments but that in many cities like Philadelphia workers owned their own homes, and that these were five or six room homes. He did not look at me with pity as a victim of capitalist propaganda. He looked pleased, as if I had told him something which buttressed his own convictions. I asked him why there were still so many pictures of Stalin around and he said this would soon pass away. He said Russia was "going back to Lenin," and that many bad things had happened under Stalin. He looked incredulous when I said I liked Moscow. Trying hard to express his feelings in his inadequate German, he said—as if in a few words he was distilling the product of long thought—"the peasant here has a hard life." He said, "I am a soldier but I believe in peace." Then he pointed to his uniform and said, "I cannot speak freely." He paid for his drink and left.

I VISITED TWO GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, the offices of Tass, for copies of speeches made at the 20th Congress, and a Ministry of Culture office on Zhdanova street where the Soviet Information Bureau publishes its Daily Review of the Soviet Press. In both there were uniformed police guards inside the door and no one could get by the guards without showing a pass with a photograph on it. Workers coming down the elevator on errands in the lobby showed their passes each time they passed the policeman. It reminded one of the Pentagon in wartime Washington.

I WENT TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE because I wanted a translation of the full text of a long editorial which *Pravda* published on April 5. The fragmentary reports I had seen of it in the foreign press on my way to Russia were disturbing. They seemed to indicate that the Soviet Union was still a long way from permitting freedom of speech even within the Communist party. On the one hand, *Pravda* did speak of re-establishing democratic principles in "Party life and activity" and praised the "bold and principled" criticism being voiced at party meetings. At the same time it criticized "some rotten elements [which] are trying to make use of criticism and self-criticism for all shorts of slanderous inventions and anti-party assertions." [See text on Page Four.] What was most disturbing was the vagueness of the editorial. I talked to the official in charge of translations at the Ministry of Culture. I told him after reading the text that I could not make head or tail of it. "Suppose," I said, "I were a Soviet citizen, honestly

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(*Continued from Page One*)

trying to understand what was permissible free speech and what was slanderous and anti-party and therefore impermissible, how could I find out from this editorial? It would only leave me confused and afraid." His answer was that all these matters referred to in the editorial had already been explained at party meetings. "Anyone who attended these meetings will know what the article means," he said. "But," I insisted, "what is the use of a newspaper article which can only be understood if the reader attends a private meeting to hear the explanation?" His reply was that this was an internal party matter. "In your country," he said, "there is free discussion—no," he interrupted himself, "that is not a good word—in your country problems are first discussed in the press but in our country they are first discussed in party meetings and in factory meetings and then we decide how much should go into the press." The talk was held in the English translation bureau, and some of his fellow workers had a hard time trying to keep a straight face during this conversation. I did not find any newspaperman in Moscow who had succeeded in learning just what had actually been said by those comrades whom *Pravda* rebuked.

THE RUSSIANS LIKE THEIR CONTACTS to be organizational. They like visits by delegations rather than individuals. Organizational contacts relieve the individual of responsibility. If a visit turns out badly, the fault lies with the organization. In addition, contacts between delegations facilitate that exchange of slogans, safe generalities and non-political pleasantries which the Russians prefer to real talk, which may become dangerous. If you reach a man directly in his office, he will call in a colleague to take part in the conversation, and provide a witness to the talk.

I SUCCEEDED IN STARTING impromptu discussions with Russians everywhere. I was not rebuffed once, and this—other foreigners told me—was a complete change from a few years ago when it was simply impossible to talk with Russians at all except on strictly official business. But I never succeeded in making a date with a Russian for a further talk alone. One man I met through an official organization for a group talk seemed most intelligent and most eager for real discussion. I asked him if he would come to my hotel for tea next day and continue our talk. He said he would like to and that he would call me up and let me know. A half hour before the appointed time he telephoned to say he couldn't come because his wife had a bad cold but he would call me within the next day or so and make another date. I never heard from him again.

ONE NIGHT I STRUCK UP a conversation with two Russians who turned out to be Jewish, very intelligent young men both of them. One taught Russian literature in a school for defective children, the other was getting his doctor's degree in literature. They spoke a little Yiddish, German and English but with a Russian-English dictionary we managed. They said the Jews had gone through a difficult period in Stalin's last years and that many Jewish writers had been killed but that things were better now. They insisted they were not afraid to talk with a foreigner. When I asked whether they had a friend who spoke English and whether we might meet again, they made a date for the following evening. I waited outside the hotel for them. At the appointed time one of them showed up with a new man, the latter well dressed and wearing a black felt hat. My acquaintance of the evening before explained that his friend was "nicht zu hause" (not at home) and that he had been unable to find the "camarade" who spoke English. I asked who the new man was but never did get his status clearly except that he seemed in command of the situation. I thanked my acquaintance for coming and asked if he could dine with me. He said that he was busy. Could he have a cup of coffee? "No," glancing nervously at his watch, he had to leave right away. He explained he faced a heavy examination next day in historical materialism. He was strained and abrupt. I had the feeling when we shook hands and parted that he was in some kind of trouble and I wondered whether the other man might not be a police agent.

I HAD A TALK with two journalists on a well known Soviet publication which circulates widely abroad. One man, a top editor, was well-tailored, slick, and intelligent but not an attractive type; he seemed very much like the Hollywood intellectuals in the film industry, a born yes-man, with a sharp nose for any change in the wind. One felt that he would never stick his neck out for any man or any principle. He was well-stocked with glib answers for the freedom of the press questions he expected from foreign journalists; what these glib answers boiled down to was that the "capitalist" press faithfully echoed the line of its government, too. The existence of some independent voices and of some independence even in the conservative and conventional press was conveniently passed over. The other man, a subordinate, was more independent minded. I asked whether Soviet writers and journalists in the future would have more freedom but I never did get a clear answer.

"It would be wrong," said the first journalist, "to say that writers felt restricted. The young people were a new Soviet generation which expressed what it sincerely had been feeling. Now that the party thinks it necessary for writers to be more independent and to write more naturally and from within, they will do so. But it would be wrong to say they were restricted."

"So," I suggested, "it is a question of changing the habits of writers?"

"Yes," was the answer, "and of revising some conceptions."

Then he added what I thought was a most appalling commentary. "Our writers," he said, "thought that to criticize our life was not their affair. They thought only to be happy and not to criticize."

When I asked whether there would be more freedom of speech, the first man said there had always been free speech in Russia. But when I asked whether any Soviet journalist had criticized the earlier attitude toward Tito or the "doctors' plot" he shifted his ground and said that the press in America or England on a subject like the German problem all followed the same line, too. "Our newspapers," he said, "defend our line, too."

I said this was not entirely true in the West. I said the *New York Times* had criticized the padlocking of the *Daily Worker* just before I left. I said I had criticized the "doctors' plot" in my own paper because I felt there was something fishy about it. I asked whether in the future, if there were a similar frameup, some Soviet journalist would criticize it, too.

"If you ask us about the doctors' plot," the journalist ex-

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plained, "now we know. The facts were distorted and invented by the Beria gang. Now that the facts have been made known, we have attacked the 'doctors' plot.' But you have to know the facts."

He never did answer my question about the future. When I cited the fact that one man, like Zola, could force open the Dreyfus case in France, I struck no response. The idea of getting the facts on one's own and of opposing the government in a political or criminal prosecution was completely foreign to his mentality. I felt not merely opportunism but genuine submissiveness in his attitude.

The other journalist seemed to feel that something more was needed to satisfy my questions. "We lived in a besieged fortress," he said. "I am now 42. All of my generation were accustomed to believe in the security agencies because these were our shield against real enemies. When we heard of measures taken by these agencies, we were sure they must be true. No revolution ever had so many enemies as ours.

"Now," he continued, "we know that these revolutionary bodies like the security police can also make mistakes. The result is a new atmosphere. Our party and the government have hardened their control over these agencies and put new and good people into them to improve them."

I suggested that one way to "improve" the secret police was to give the individual citizen more rights against them, to establish safeguards like our habeas corpus against the police.

"In the West," the second journalist explained, "it was different. You had a very long experience and got used to defending yourselves against the bourgeois state. But here from the beginning it was a people's state and there was no practical need for such protective procedures. The last few years, however," he conceded, "have showed the need for some such safeguards."

On the question of Tito, the second journalist also had something interesting to add. He said, "Only a small number of our people ever went abroad. We had no way to judge for ourselves. Now that thousands are beginning to go abroad and see for themselves, it will help to prevent such mistakes in the future."

I Was Treated Rudely only once during my visit to the U.S.S.R. I had just come out of the famous puppet theatre of Abrasov. It was about 11 p.m. and raining. In my meagre Russian I asked a man where I could find the Mayakovsky place station of the Metro. I couldn't understand his answer, but it was obviously unfriendly. A young girl standing nearby was angered by his "nekulturni" (uncultured, a very harsh term in contemporary Russia as I later gathered) conduct. She motioned me to follow her, took me down into the subway, and even insisted on paying for my ticket. She rode with me to Sverdlov place and showed me the exit nearest to my hotel. In the meantime we had acquired a drunk who spoke some English and insisted on treating the girl as a pickup. She was very embarrassed. When she left I took off my hat in (I hope) my best *bourgeois* style, shook her hand and said "spasibo" (thanks) to save her face with the drunk.

Everywhere I Found Russians went out of their way to be helpful as soon as they learned I was a foreigner, and there seemed to be no prejudice against me when I said I was an American. I got to the Bolshoi theatre just as the performance was starting and the ushers were closing the doors. I didn't know where to go or what to do and was on the verge of being shut out when I told an usher, "ne panamayou parusski" (don't understand Russian). He at once caught on that I was a foreigner, found me a vacant seat in the darkness and then after the first scene came back and took me to my proper place. Perhaps the most striking bit of unexpectedly non-bureaucratic friendliness occurred when I was leaving. You are forbidden to take rubles out of the country. I had seven rubles and 30 kopecks left when we got to currency control in Vilna on my way out to Warsaw. So I marked down on my currency declaration, seven rubles and 30 kopecks. The officer in charge shook his head sadly, and said "nyet, nyet." He carefully crossed out the seven rubles and 30 kopecks, then stamped the document approved. But he made no effort to take the money from me.

I Went to Two Performances in Moscow. The first was at the huge Bolshoi theatre where a ballet named "Laurenciana" was being played that night. I liked the enormous brightly colored theatre, the gay sets, the music and the audience, which was enjoying itself. But I found the ballet itself conventional, and the story corny; peasant boy saves peasant girl from advances of arrogant knight in medieval village. I was so bored I left after the first act. I didn't think it half as much fun as just walking the streets and looking at the people.

The other performance was a sheer joy. I saw "The Girl With the Fluttering Eyelids," a satire on Hollywood, done at the puppet theatre of Abrasov. It had been on a triumphant tour in England, and someone should bring it to America. I had never seen anything like it before—a full length play written for puppets, and the puppets specially designed for the play. The satire was terribly clever—I heard later that our Ambassador Bohlen had enjoyed it immensely. In one scene there are three puppet stenographers taking dictation at once from three collaborating writers in the best frenetic Hollywood manner. An elderly usher who spoke English kindly explained the plot to me before the play began; it was a take-off on Carmen. But after the second act, when I saw the smugglers being executed with a flame gun and I asked her to explain, she suddenly went dead on me. She hadn't seen that act, she didn't know what had happened, she practically couldn't speak English anymore. I gathered later that Abrasov was satirizing the Marshall Plan and American military policy in that scene. The usher was afraid of offending me if she explained.

I Believe That Subconsciously or unconsciously every American in Moscow must feel a slight uneasiness, even a little anxiety. These are our rivals and imitators; the subway and the skyscrapers and even more so the booster spirit reflect their desire to imitate, to overtake and to surpass our own country. It is easy to see on the surface how far they yet have to go, and to sneer at their nouveau riche vulgarity as the Nineteenth century English visitor sneered (in much the same worried spirit) at the new brash giant growing up in America. But to see the building going on and the beautiful new department stores, to read the speeches of the 20th Congress and the stupendous figures of the new Five Year Plan, is to feel that this new rival is a giant, a gauche and slovenly giant whose manners it is easy to ridicule, but whose capacity for huge strides is not to be discounted.

(*More Next Week*)

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A Document Which Reveals the Ferment in the Soviet Union

Pravda's Warning That Free Speech Must Not Be Carried Too Far

On April 5, Pravda carried a long editorial warning Communists not to carry free speech too far. We reprint here the heart of that editorial as translated by official Soviet sources in Moscow. Only the italics are added. It is worth a close reading. It reflects considerable ferment within the Communist party; three different meetings are mentioned at which "slanderous" and "demagogic" remarks went unrebuked. The editorial, though in the Soviet Union's leading party paper, is stale and uninspired; this is how a tired hack writes when he no longer believes what he is writing. The editorial is turgid, verbose and obscure; nowhere does it give the slightest hint of just what these rebellious comrades said or why they were wrong to say it. The reference to "petty bourgeois licentiousness" recalls our own reactionaries, who are always saying that liberty is not to be confused with license. What Pravda says all too plainly is that it is safer to keep one's mouth shut.

"As the current meetings of Party activists and the meetings of primary Party organizations show, the Communists are, on the basis of broad inner-party democracy, boldly and principledly criticizing those who have not given up their bureaucratic methods of work, they are exposing existing shortcomings and charting out concrete ways and means of quickly eliminating them so as to improve our work in every way in all branches of economic and cultural construction, and to enhance the role of Party organizations in the struggle for communism. This principled and bold criticism, permeated with the spirit of Bolshevik Party consciousness, and concern for the great cause of our Party, must be upheld and developed in every way.

"At the same time we cannot disregard such facts when some rotten elements are trying to make use of criticism and self-criticism for all sorts of slanderous inventions and anti-party assertions. Thus, at a meeting of the Party organization of a certain scientific laboratory, staff workers Avalov, Orlov, Nesterov and Schedrin made use of inner-party democracy for slanderous statements directed against the Party's policy and its Leninist foundations. *The members of the Party organization have not displayed real Bolshevik militant irreconcilability to these anti-party demarches.* Provocative anti-party statements were also made by L. Yaroshenko at a Party meeting of the Moscow Regional Statistical Board. Such statements are in essence echoing someone else's pronouncements, repeating the hackneyed slanderous inventions of the foreign reactionary propaganda.

"*Pretending to condemn the cult of the individual some rotten elements are trying to question the correctness of the Party's policy.* All the course of the Soviet Union's historic development refutes these inventions, utterly demolishes such unworthy attempts.

Marxist Mysticism: 'The Party's Collective Wisdom'

"Throughout its history the Party's policy was and remained a Leninist policy. This policy has been elaborated by the Party and its Central Committee in the course of the struggle for the victory of socialism, and it embodies the Party's collective wisdom. Its great verility (sic) has been tested by the decades of our people's great creative endeavor. The world historic successes of the Soviet people are an explicit and conclusive proof of the correctness of the Communist Party's policy. The fact that our Party has unfolded a resolute struggle against the shortcomings in Party and Government work, in economic construction, to overcome the consequences of the cult of the individual testifies to the great force of the Party and its unshakeable loyalty to Leninism. The Communist Party is now united more than ever before, and is closely rallied around its Central Committee. All our Party is unanimous in approving the wise Leninist policy. But there are still facts when certain Party organizations by-pass philistine, swampy moods expressed by certain people, do not expose them, *act liberally towards people coming out with anti-Party statements.* Thus, comrade Ternovsky permitted himself to make an actually demagogic statement at a Party functionaries meeting of the Dzerzhinsky District, Chkalov. *Despite this,* the meeting participants, including the chairman of the Chkalov Regional Soviet's Executive Committee, member of the Party Regional Committee's Bureau, comrade Zhukov, *did not rebuff the speaker.*

"The Party organizations must resolutely combat every deviation from the policy of the Communist Party, from Marxist-Leninist ideology. Communist Party Rules give every Communist the right of freely discussing all the questions of Party policy. But the Party has never tolerated and will not tolerate bourgeois licentiousness, the more so anti-Party statements in its midst, even if they are solitary; *the Party cannot permit the freedom of discussing problems to be interpreted as the freedom of propagating views alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism,* because this contradicts the provisions of the Party Rules, and the Party principles."

Coming: A Visit to A Kolkhoz and An Interview With A Russian Jurist

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